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STATE PASS USDA ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAS/ITP
STATE PASS DOL/ILAB SUDHA HALEY
STATE PASS USTR FOR IVES/WEISEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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Domestic Developments

[¶1.](#) "WEST... WASTE?:" The ROKG has selected 325 college students and

graduates to study English and receive internships for 18 months in the U.S. under the WEST (Work, English Study and Travel) program agreed upon by the leaders of the two nations in August, but it is facing skepticism from the participants because prospects for internship employment are unclear and the expenses for the program are not less than ordinary English language courses. (Dong-a)
Media Analysis

Davos - World Economic Forum

Most media coverage focused on the criticism of the U.S. made by Chinese and Russian Prime Ministers regarding the current financial crisis. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was quoted as saying pointedly: "Just a year ago at Davos, American delegates emphasized the U.S. economy's fundamental stability. Today, investment banks, the pride of Wall Street, have virtually ceased to exist." Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao was also cited as blaming the current crisis, without naming any specific country, for inappropriate macroeconomic policies of "some economies" and their unsustainable model of development characterized by prolonged low savings and high consumption and excessive expansion of financial institutions in blind pursuit of profit. Conservative Chosun Ilbo titled its story, "U.S. Got Told Off." Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun's headline read: "Davos Forum Turns into a Venue to Criticize 'U.S.-Style Capitalism.'" Moderate Seoul Shinmun wrote in the headline: "China Aims for Greater Say in Establishing a New Global Economic Order."

North Korea

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo ran an op-ed by Kim Keun-sik, a North Korea expert at Kyungnam University, which said: "It is fortunate that North Korea and the U.S. seem to be agreeing on the need to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through negotiations. In order for those negotiations to proceed smoothly, however, the North and the U.S. should return to the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement and start from there. In fact, how to resolve the nuclear issue has already been spelled out in the Joint Statement. A close look at the Joint Statement tells us that Washington's concern that North Korea may not give up its nuclear ambitions or Pyongyang's suspicion that the U.S. may not abandon its hostile policy toward the North is just an unfounded fear. This is why the details and spirit of the September 19 Joint Statement should be the basis for future talks between the North and the U.S."

Opinions/Editorials

U.S., North Korea Should Return to "September 19 Six-Party Statement"

(JoongAng Ilbo, January 30, 2009, Page 27)

By Kim Keun-sik, Professor of Politics at Kyungnam University

It is fortunate that North Korea and the U.S. have an agreement to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through negotiations, but in order to make smooth progress in those negotiations, the North and the U.S. should agree to another principle: they should go back to the September 19, 2005, Joint Statement and start from there.

In fact, how to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue was already spelled out in the Joint Statement. North Korea is supposed to dismantle all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. For its part, the U.S. is supposed to normalize its relations with the North and provide a security guarantee to Pyongyang in return. Both sides should carry out these obligations in phases according to the action-for-action principle. A close look at the September 19 Joint Statement, which both parties officially signed and agreed to, tells us that Washington's concern about the North not giving up its nuclear ambitions or Pyongyang's suspicion that the U.S. may not abandon its hostile policy toward the North is just an unfounded fear. They should not forget that not only the contents of the September 19 Joint Statement but also the process of having reached the agreement is the result of mutual respect and compromise. The North Korean nuclear issue already has a good solution: the September 19 Joint Statement. This is why the contents and spirit of the September 19 Joint Statement should be the basis for the future talks between the North and the U.S.

Two press conferences were held yesterday related to the deadly incident in Yongsan. In the morning, opposition parties and civic organizations held a press conference and unveiled their plan to hold an event on Feb. 1 at Cheonggye Plaza in memory of the "victims of the Yongsan manslaughter and to deter MB's (President Lee Myung-bak's) evil laws."

Then in the afternoon, a national civic group organized around the Yongsan incident announced that an event to remember the victims would be held every weekend, beginning this Saturday, and that areas for candlelight vigils and for lighting incense in memory of those who died in the standoff would be set up across the country.

Regretfully, the remarks remind us of the candlelight vigils of last year that started with panic over mad cow disease. But what is most worrisome is that these are the same civic organizations that directed last year's candlelight vigils. Even their press conference was billed as a "press conference to condemn violent and murderous crackdowns and to deter MB's evil laws."

The purpose itself conveys the feeling that these groups want to use the accident as a cause for anti-government protests. According to the Korea Economic Research institute, the social costs for the candlelight vigils last spring amounted to 3.7 trillion won (\$2.64 billion). Amid the economic crisis, we must avoid wasting our national resources and wealth again in the same manner.

In particular, the Democratic Party's plan to protest outside the National Assembly is inappropriate. This kind of protest was an extreme measure that political parties used under military rule

since their legal activities were severely checked and limited. Instead, the party must find out whether the government is responsible for the incident, and work within the National Assembly to draw up and pass a bill to prevent a similar case from occurring.

The Democratic Party has an enormous amount of work to do in the Assembly in February. First of all, it needs to hold confirmation hearings after the Cabinet reshuffle. Various bills to revive the economy that were postponed last year must no longer be delayed. A law to prevent violence in the National Assembly must be established.

The Democratic Party is a legitimate political party that must see through social division and conflict and unite society by working within the National Assembly.

If Democrats want to take to the streets they must give up their positions as legislators. That's the least that they can do for the people.

Features

The WEST Program Is Criticized for Wasting Money
(Dong-a Ilbo, January 30, 2009, Page 12)

By Reporter Hwang Kyu-in

Korean government selected 325 participants, but prospects for internship employment are not clear, and the expenses for the program are not cheaper than ordinary English language courses.

A female graduate surnamed Kim, 23, who majored in design, will head to the U.S. this March under the WEST (Work, English Study and Travel) program.

She had until January 29 to choose a company where she would like to work, out of three U.S. sponsor companies including the ICD, CIEE, and AIPT, but she did not know where she could get an internship related to her major. This is because the detailed information on the companies continued to change until the morning of January 29.

The graduate said, "When an overseas education center in Korea tries

to send 300 students to the U.S., about 20 to 30 consultants give them advice. But participants of the WEST program are confused because the information becomes available to them too slowly."

Under the WEST program, as agreed by the leaders of the two nations last August, students and graduates can take a language course for 5 months, work as interns for 12 months, and go sightseeing for 1 month, while staying in the U.S. for up to 18 months. A sponsor company managed by the U.S. Department of State will help them to find an internship and a language program. .

The Korean government expected that many of the language courses (Korean students currently take) will be replaced by the WEST program with cheaper expenses, but participants are skeptical of the program.

A senior student surnamed Jang, 23, said, "I was proud to be going to the U.S. as a representative of Korea when I applied for the program. But I was disappointed by what's going on here. I requested information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, but I only heard that there are many trials and errors since this is the first time the program is being implemented. There has not been any orientation program until now."

Participants will need to have 12,500 dollars in order to stay in the U.S. while taking a language course, but there is no system in place to support the cost. Participants say, "If I have to pay for all the costs, there is little difference between taking a language training course through an overseas education center and the WEST program."

A female senior student surnamed Yoo, 24, of Seoul National University mentioned, "The strength of the WEST program lies in getting an internship, compared with ordinary language courses. But I'm not sure that I can work as an intern. The Korean government has said that participants can stay in the U.S. on the salaries they earned as interns. If we can't get an internship, it will be nothing but a waste of time."

An official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "We selected 325 college students and graduates by taking into account the number of internships available. We will help them find jobs through a job fair, while they are taking language training courses for 5 months."

"ROK MND should be responsible for delayed relocation of USFK bases to Pyeongtaek"
(Segye Ilbo, January 30, 2009, Page 15)

By Reporter Park Byung-jin

USFK Commander Gen. Sharp visited ROK Defense minister Lee to protest the delay

In relation to the current long-time delay of the USFK base relocation to Pyeongtaek, it has become known that USFK Commander Gen. Walter Sharp lodged a protest with Defense Minister Lee regarding the plan to delay the relocation.

According to the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) and USFK sources, Gen. Sharp visited the MND on January 16th. When he met Minister Lee, he expressed his dissatisfaction with delaying the USFK base relocation project that had previously been agreed upon by the ROK and U.S. It is the first time that the USFK commander has directly expressed his opinion on the base relocation issue.

An MND official said, "Gen. Sharp urged the MND to engage itself actively in order to resolve complications between the ROK and the U.S. over subordinate issues regarding the base relocation." The official explained, "However, these issues are inevitably time-consuming because they concern national interests." It is known that the USFK wants to secure a suitable lease term for the residence facilities for USFK service members, and secure the right to place the construction orders for special facilities, including communication centers and medical facilities.

The official analyzed, "The timing for the meeting between Gen.

Sharp and Minister Lee was only two days after former Chief of the MURO Park Byung-hee was replaced on charges of receiving bribes. It seems that Gen. Sharp put pressure upon (resolving the) base relocation project, because these kind of issues can be dealt with at the working level."

The 'D&D Focus', a South Korean monthly military magazine, also reported yesterday that Gen. Sharp delivered 6-7 request items to Minister Lee and urged MND to perform its obligation (to handle them.).

The magazine also reported that Gen. Sharp took this step because the U.S. Department of Defense had inspected the current status of the relocation plan on many occasions from last December to earlier this year, and USFK had been rebuked for this matter by a key Pentagon official in charge of Korean affairs.

Gen. Sharp is concerned about the delay of every aspect of the project including placing construction orders, designing building sites, and constructing facilities.

The magazine added that the ROK and the U.S. sides are having difficulty regarding the relocation of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division.

The ROK MND has been saying since March 2008 that it will announce a specific timeline and the overall costs of the base relocation project; however, the MND has postponed the announcement five times.

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